

MOTION BY MAYOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

FEBRUARY 15, 2011

A recent NBC news report stated that the recent deadly San Bruno gas explosion illustrated the dangers of natural gas mains made of steel, which are susceptible to corrosion, leaking and whose rigidity makes it susceptible to cracking under stress. However, since 1970, leak, fires and explosions have declined since many established utilities have switched over to plastic pipes which are less vulnerable to corrosion. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, deaths in such incidents have declined from 246 in the 1970's to 120 in the 2000's while the majority of natural gas pipes are plastic approximately 60% of the nation's 475,000 of large gas mains - those wider than 16 inch in diameter are steel according to the Natural Gas Supply Association.

According to federal statistics, steel pipes are implicated in more natural gas incidents than those made of plastic materials.

Through August 11, 2010, the Pipeline & Hazardous Safety Administration record 57 such incidents in 2010. Twenty one of them involving steel pipes and 11 of them plastic pipe, most of the other incidents involved metal pipes usually aluminum or cast iron.

The second largest natural gas distributor, Atmos Energy Corporation which operates in 12 states, agreed in September, 2010 to replace 100,000 steel pipelines in north Texas by late 2012.

The Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates natural gas pipelines has commissioned a feasibility study to replace all 525,000 steel service lines across the state.

In Washington, the Puget Sound Energy Company had to replace about 9,000 older steel gas lines and in Arizona regulators include a warning notice in the monthly bills to the nearly 2 million customers served by the Southwest Gas Corporation.

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The notice warns that “buried steel gas lines are subject to the effects of corrosion if they are not maintained, which could result in leakage” and state that “it’s the customers’ responsibility to monitor the lines to identify these potential problems before they become hazardous.”

These actions were taken as a result of gas line explosions which result in death and injury.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Works to report back to the Board in 45 days with the age and number of miles of steel gas lines in Los Angeles County and the status of replacing them with plastic pipes.

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